

REMARKS

Claims 9-18 are pending in this application and have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as anticipated by JP 2002-346770 to Makoto *et al.* ("Makoto"), or under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Makoto in view of several other references.¹ The primary reference relied upon in all of the rejections is Makoto, which is not prior art because the priority date of this application pre-dates Makoto.

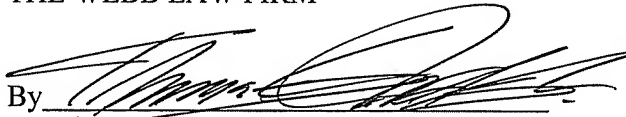
The date of publication of the Makoto application is "04.12.2002." In Japan, dates are written with the day being first followed by the month, then the year. Thus, "04" refers to the day, and "12" refers to the month. Accordingly, Makoto was published on December 4, 2002, not March 12, 2002.

This application claims priority to JP 2002-329847, which was filed on "13.11.2002" or November 13, 2002. Therefore, Makoto is not prior art.

For this reason, reconsideration and withdrawal of the asserted rejections, and allowance of claims 9-18 is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at (412) 471-8815.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ U.S. Pat. No. 3,963,449 to Seki *et al.* ("Seki"), U.S. Pat. No. 3,602,682 to Hoeffleur ("Hoeffleur"), and/or U.S. Pat. No. 5,794,835 to Colligan *et al.*